

My name is Sue Mach and I'm the chair of the English Department at Clackamas Community College. I'm speaking today in support of a 550 million dollar budget for community colleges.

Six years ago in 2009, our department had an enrollment of 6,489 students. We taught 298 sections and employed **fourteen** full-time instructors.

Here is a list of recent department accomplishments:

We completely redesigned our developmental education curriculum and program learning outcomes to comply with state mandates.

We've been working with the Math Department to construct new placement testing procedures so that students are more accurately placed in their courses.

We created a successful faculty driven Writing Center that conducted 2,165 tutoring sessions last year—42% more than 1,530 sessions held the previous year

And last but not least, we're pioneering a new A.S. Degree that centers on the art of storytelling and includes four focus areas: Literature, Creative Writing, Publishing, and Comics.

All of the programs I just mentioned have been implemented since 2009. During this time we've continued to teach foundational classes while our enrollment has increased to 6,502. The number of sections we teach has also increased to 334.

What has diminished is the size of our fulltime faculty. This fall we employed only **eight and a half** fulltime instructors. We are very tired.

At the start of every term, I ask the students in my writing courses to answer this question: Describe either your greatest fear or your greatest wish and explain how this fear or wish defines you. I receive answers like the following:

"I wish to stop living in my car."

"I've been sober for seven months and I'm afraid to start drinking."

A direct quote from a couple of days ago:

"I suffer from depression and PTSD. Waking up each morning is hard, especially when I have the weight of past failures on my shoulders. I want to be here at school, but I'm frightened that my financial aid won't be given back to me."

I've been teaching at Clackamas for almost twenty years. I've seen policies and promises come and go. What keeps me motivated is the courage of my students. Just yesterday I wrote a letter of recommendation to a graduate school for a veteran who wanted to kill himself when I first met him. It takes a lot of time and energy to offer support, encouragement, and curriculum to people who are in the process of critical life transformations. As the number of students in my classes, in addition to my workload increases, I fear that I will let someone slip through the cracks.

Our students need our support, as well as the support of counselors, financial aid advisors, and a whole host of other people to help them navigate the system. Often, we're their last hope. Please fund community colleges at the highest level possible. Thank you.